

DINNER ON THE GRIP

By A. WALLIE

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Captain Alexander Mather of the steam coaster Grip was hurrying along Cardiff street-dockward to his vessel when he was accosted by a youngish man smartly attired in yachting costume.

"Captain Mather?" the stranger queried. "That's me," the sailor retorted gruffly enough, having all the dislike of his class toward the average amateur seaman.

"You were pointed out to me as master of a boat just leaving for Southampton. I want to go there at once."

The hint was obvious enough, but Mather did not choose to follow it up. "Take the train, then," he replied. "Passengers ain't in my line."

"So I would!" the young man appeared disposed to be persistent—"but I have a lot of heavy baggage here, and I wish to accompany me to my yacht, which is lying off Cowes. If you'll take it and me I'll make it well worth your while."

The captain hesitated. The Grip possessed small accommodation for outsiders, but a job like this might mean something to the skipper's pocket.

"Well," he said, surveying the stranger over again, "my skipper ain't a liner, you know, but just a coastin' tramp covered this blessed minute with coal muck that won't come off her till she starts washin' herself outside Lundy."

His new acquaintance seemed in no way dismayed at this description. "That will be all right, captain," he returned. "Come in here a minute and let us talk it over."

The place thus indicated was an adjacent bar, where over suitable drinks the yachtsman continued negotiations.

"There are about a dozen large wooden cases," he went on, "with furnishings and my own outfit for a long West Indian cruise. I should have sent them on ahead of me but for some stupid delay, and now if I lose sight of them heaven knows how long I may be kept waiting for them."

"What's your yacht's name?" demanded Mather.

The stranger took out his cardcase. "You are a bit suspicious," he said pleasantly enough, "but we'll have everything fair and square." He handed over a card as he spoke, and on it the sailor read, "E. V. Rentore, S. Y. Sea-Swift R. Z. Y. C."

The first names were unknown to Mather, but the last four cryptic letters he was aware represented the title of one of the most exclusive clubs in the kingdom.

"Then, sir," he said with an obvious change of manner, "if you want me to take your things it will have to be arranged quickly. I'll be hauling 'em out for sea in a couple of hours. If they are not too heavy and you have them alongside within that time I might manage."

"My man shall have the cases down within the time you say. They are not heavy, and your own crane will easily swing them on board. And as to terms—will you suit 'em?"

The sailor gasped. He had not expected nearly so much.

"If you'll throw in the price of a new hat for myself, sir," he responded quickly, "we'll call it a deal."

"Good!" Rentore produced his purse. "Here's half of it now, and a couple of sovereigns for yourself."

Thus the bargain was sealed, and the yachtsman, much elated at his fortune, led his way down to the Grip. He had not been long there when a wagon arrived, bearing the cases and escorted by a man of the valet type.

"That's the stuff," the latter grumbled to the skipper, "and what the captain's doing traveling with it in a couple of hours I don't know. Is your ship all right?"

"All right," the skipper replied, "but I've levied for 'em scornfully."

"Improvement and a bit of a return for 'em," the collector replied, "and I'll be glad to send out the bill, so."

The ordinance relating to yachtsmen was brought up for final passage and was assailed by Mr. Moore as a useless piece of legislation and was laid on the table.

A Puzzle to Police.

Detective Sergeant James Bell of East Orange, who has had a long experience in police and detective work, says that the police of the Oranges are up against the hardest proposition they ever struck in their efforts to capture the burglar who is known throughout the Oranges, Montclair and this town as the man with the small hand. This is the thief who gains entrance to houses by cutting a block from the door panels. His work, Detective Bell says, is the boldest and most deliberate of any craft that the police have had experience with, and the singular and puzzling feature of it is that none of his plunder ever comes to light in the pawnshops, fences, or other places where thieves usually dispose of their goods. The man with the small hand has made extensive hauls in the Oranges, Glen Ridge, Montclair and this town, and in nearly every case his work shows evidence of daring and deliberation. In several instances he has not been detected to eat or drink some of the food that he has found in cellars while engaged in plundering.

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did the rest, so sit down and do him justice."

Captain Mather was sufficient of a philosopher to accept the gifts the gods thus sent. He sat down as requested, and if his handling of his knife and fork left something to be desired his appreciation of the meal was none the less patent. Moreover, his host saw to it that his glass was frequently replenished, so that as the cheese came on the table the skipper went under it.

"Perkins," ordered Rentore, "get the steward to help you to take Captain Mather to his room; he does not seem well. And—ah—you might have word sent to the bridge I'll be glad if the mate will join me here. The night's fine, and I expect the boatswain can take the ship past Lundy without sinking the island."

The passenger appeared to the steward, who was present, to be also slightly touched with an after dinner manner. The mate, when he came, had the same impression, but nevertheless that officer also collapsed, as his superior had done, leaving Rentore still quite composed. The chief engineer, who had joined the feast at the request of the giver of it, along with the mate, was simultaneously overcome.

"Most extraordinary," remarked Rentore. "Never saw men so easily upset. I'm going on deck. Perkins, you might see the steward gets out that case of whisky for the men forward and the stokers."

On deck the passenger lit a cigar, mounted to the bridge and joined the boatswain, who had charge of it.

"I've sent a bottle or two of hard stuff forward," he said to him affably. "You might go down and have your share. I'm sailor enough to watch her if you leave me the course."

"Thank 'ee kindly, sir," answered the seaman, who, like the rest of the crew, was blessing his stars for having given the Grip the carrying of such a benefactor. "Keep her sou'west by west, and she'll take no harm for the minute I'll be gone."

When the boatswain's cap had vanished down the ladder Rentore turned to the hand at the wheel.

"You shouldn't be out of this, my man," he said. "Off you go, and drink my health. I can keep her head straight."

He gripped the wheel, and the sailor saw the compass card kept steady to the course. Then he, too, disappeared, and silence reigned fore and aft along the decks of the Grip.

This lasted for perhaps half an hour—then Perkins appeared upon the bridge.

"They're gone under at last!" he said in tones very different from any he had previously used. "Shall I let our lads loose?"

"Yes," answered Rentore. "Tell some of them to see quickly to the fires—I can feel the old tub's speed slackening. And send a hand here to relieve me."

Perkins descended to where the cases were ranged and tapped on each. They opened as he did so, and dim figures from them darted swiftly to his bidding. The Grip had got a fresh crew.

Next morning, just before daylight, a small coasting steamer crept into the anchorage of St. Mary's, Seilly, and brought up close alongside the palatial yacht Eosopora, belonging to a multi-millionaire of American extraction. It had been lying there for some days while its owner explored the islands in accordance with intentions previously announced somewhat widely in the public prints.

The Eosopora was visited by a host of armed men from the new arrival. The anchor watch on her deck was overpowered, the remainder of her crew battered down, and the millionaire was robbed under threat of violence of every portable article of value he had with him, including a large sum of gold and his wife's jewels, reputedly of fabulous worth.

Word of this daring robbery reached the shore, but by that time the stranger had utterly vanished beyond sight.

During the night following the Grip reached Southampton and was berthed ready to commence discharge next morning. Not even the police on duty noticed that her crew all slipped ashore one by one during the darkness.

It was the lumpers, coming down to commence work on the cargo, who found the place deserted. They explored the forecastle list, and from below it came a muffled knocking. Hailing the light leading into the fore peak, there emerged from that literally black hole a string of disconsolate figures, Captain Mather bringing up the rear in crestfallen fashion.

"Here," he demanded, rubbing his eyes, "where in blazes are we?"

"Southampton," in course, he was told. "Where's the ship been?" he added to a looky. "I know no more than a looky. I'd best see the police. If they'll catch me that yachtsman I'll give 'em a sentiment in which the multi-millionaire fully concurred."

The Origin of Woolwich Arsenal. was a Woolwich arsenal is said to owe its existence to an explosion. According to a story the surveyor general gave several of the Duke of Marlborough.

The Oranges recast into English guns at way has passed. A young Swiss student, sengers from tualch, who was traveling in trolley cars.

Scientific knowledge, happen- trolley cars. Present and noted that the grumbling on the rule left places in the during the rush rule left places in the.

Motormen say the the new rule, for caused an explosion, at- with passengers' loss of life. Schalech was Some of the cars summoned to the ord- turn over and a his abilities tested, and he sengers are for- trested to select a site for they become so big. His choice fell on the knees of person he was superintend- that it is almost in get in or out of the st-

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